

WE CLAIM:

1. For use in a virtual network computing session wherein plural remotely located users connected together in a global information network share a software application in a server of said desktop computer, a method for controlling access of
5 users to the software application, said method comprising the steps of:

assigning an identifying address for each of the users authorized for access to the software application;

storing in a file the identifying addresses of the users authorized for access to the software application;

10 receiving a request from a viewer for access to the software application, wherein said request includes an address identifying the requesting viewer; and

15 comparing the address identifying the requesting viewer with said identifying addresses stored in said file during the virtual network computing session and providing access to the software application if the address identifying the requesting viewer is stored in said file or denying access if the address identifying the requesting viewer is not stored in said file, wherein access is provided or denied during the virtual network computing session.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein access to the software application includes WRITE access for permitting a user to exercise control over the software application and READ access for permitting a user only to view the exercise of control over the software application by other users, and wherein only identifying addresses of users authorized for WRITE access to the software application are stored in said file.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of designating a first user of the virtual network computing session as a session owner and providing said session owner with WRITE access to the software application.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of permitting the session owner to assign either WRITE or READ access to the software application to subsequent users of the virtual network computing session.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising the step of permitting the session owner to change the WRITE or READ access to the software application previously assigned to any subsequent user of the virtual network computing session.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein said global information network comprises the Internet and said identifying address comprises an Internet Protocol address.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the desktop computer includes a video display and the method further includes the step of presenting on the video display for the session owner information regarding viewers who have access to the software application.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the step of presenting on the video display information regarding viewers who have access to the software application includes indicating if the viewer has active or passive access to the software application.

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of presenting on the video display the number of viewers from a given identifying address who have been granted access to the software application.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of providing first and second selectors on said video display for allowing the session owner to grant access to the software application to all viewers or deny access to the software application to all viewers, respectively.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising the step of providing a selector on said video display for each connected viewer.

12. A method for conducting a virtual network computing session wherein plural remotely located users connected together by a global information network share a software application on a server of a desktop computer, wherein the users are provided either active access for exercising control over the software application or passive access for only observing the exercise of control over the software application exercised by other users having active access, said method comprising the steps of:

assigning a first user of the software application with active access for exercising control over the software application and for monitoring the actions of other users who have active access to the software application;

10 permitting said first user of the software application to assign subsequent users with active and/or passive access to the software application; and

allowing said first user to terminate the virtual network computing session and cancel the active and/or passive access of subsequent users to the software application.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

assigning an identifying address for each of the users;

storing in a file the identifying addresses of the users authorized for active access to the software application; and

comparing the address identifying a viewer requesting access to the software application with the identifying addresses in said file and granting the viewer active access if said viewer's identifying address is in said file.

14. The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of permitting the first user of the software application to change the access to the software application previously assigned to any subsequent users during the virtual network computing session.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the first user assigns the password and disseminates said password to subsequent users having active and/or passive access to the software application.

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